

VA Health Care Network News



September 2000

Customer Service Council Receives Innovation Award

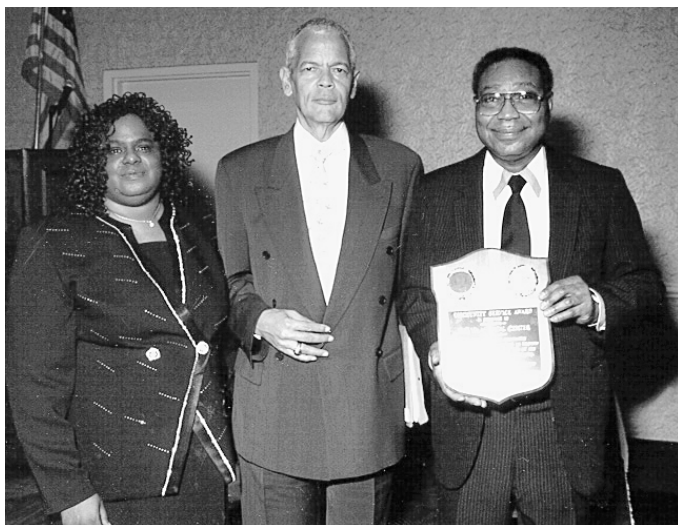
Dr. Thomas Garthwaite, Acting Under Secretary for Health, presented Network 2's **Customer Service Council** with the **Under Secretary for Health Innovations Award** at the Buffalo VA on August 11. Network 2 was recognized for its performance scores in customer service and the programs established throughout upstate New York. Some of the initiatives of this council include the Greeter Program, Hoptels, "comping" program, improved signage, implementation of a Network clinic cancellation policy and quarterly reports that go to appropriate management to develop improvement plans.



Acting VA Under Secretary for Health Dr. Thomas L. Garthwaite and Network Director Fred Malphurs congratulate VISN 2 Customer Service Council members Fabiane Erb (WNY), Louise O'Neil and Kathy Prividera (Albany) at Innovations Awards ceremony.

EXCEEDING THE
EXPECTATION

More Customer Service On The Web At:
<http://vaww.visn2.med.va.gov/customer/service.html>



Far right Syracuse VA's Odie Freeman, Minority Affairs Manager and Coordinator of the annual City Wide Health Fair, far left Donna Reese, President, Syracuse/Onondaga County Chapter NAACP, middle the Honorable Julian Bond.

Syracuse VA Receives the 2000 NAACP Community Service Award

The Syracuse VA Medical Center received the NAACP Community Service Award for the year 2000. The VA Medical Center was cited for its ongoing commitment to provide quality health care to residents of the inner city via the Annual City Wide Health Screening Fair begun by the Syracuse VA in 1995.

The award was presented at the NAACP's Annual Freedom Fund Award Banquet at the Holiday Inn, Electronics Parkway, Liverpool, New York on Thursday, May 25, 2000.

The keynote speaker was The Honorable Julian Bond, former Georgia State Senator and Chairman of the NAACP National Board of Directors.





EMPLOYEES IN THE NEWS



David Wood has been selected Chief Operating Officer (COO) for the Bath VA. Joseph Striano, local Geriatrics and Extended Care (GEC) Line Manager was the acting Medical Center Director since August 1999. David has held various positions across the country within the VA including Administrative Officer for Clinical Services (Sioux Falls, SD), Planner, Public Affairs Officer (El Paso, TX), and Health Systems Specialist (Albany, NY).

Scott Murray, Network Behavioral VA Healthcare (BVAC) Manager, has been selected by The Association of VA Psychologist Leaders (AVAPL) as the year 2000 recipient of the Leadership Award. He was presented the award on August 7th at the AVAPL Business Meeting in Washington D.C.



E. Jackson Allison, Jr. MD, FACEP, FIFEM, and Dean, SUNY Upstate Medical University College of Medicine, received the first Fellowship Recognition Program, known as the "Order of the IFEM." It recognizes outstanding individuals for their ongoing contributions to the advancement of emergency medicine internationally. Dr. Allison believes "Emergency care is 'the safety net' for millions of people. The emergency department is the place you depend on when you have no other place to go."

Mary Mead has been selected Network 2 Clinical Application Coordinator. She will initiate and coordinate efforts that further Network 2's implementation of the electronic medical record and be the liaison between the Care Lines and VAMC Clinical Coordinators. Her office will be at the Syracuse VA.



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VA Healthcare News is published by and for the employees and stakeholders of VHA Network 2 Medical Centers at Albany, Batavia, Bath, Buffalo, Canandaigua, Syracuse and their outpatient clinics.

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Fran Peters, Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) Operations Manager for Medical VA Care (MVAC) at the Stratton VA Medical Center in Albany, received the Northeastern NY Federal Executive Association Award for Distinguished Federal Government Service for Staff Support at the Annual Federal Women's Program Luncheon. The award was based on her work ethic and ability to get things done, combined with her attention to detail and coordinating the expansion of the VA Community Based Outpatient Clinic Programs.

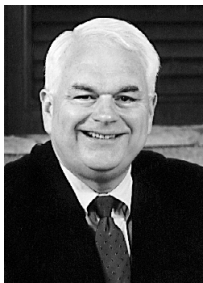
Darlene A. DeLancey, VA Healthcare Network Upstate New York Health Systems Specialist for Organizational Development and Learning has been elected President of the Federal Executive Association (FEA), Northeastern NY. The purpose of the association is to promote efficiency in the conduct of the business of the government by cooperation and coordination among all government departments located in the Northeastern area.





MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

You Do Make A Difference!



You do make a difference. Just think how far we have come and where we were just five years ago. We had a financial

short fall, in the midst of a reorganization, in need of more patients. Today, because of employees like yourself we are nationally renowned for our accomplishments which include computerized patient records (CPRS), Bar Code Medication

Administration (BCMA), customer service improvements, 23 new community based outpatient clinics and additional accreditations we have received with commendation.

These are BIG changes.

Other Networks are asking "How are they doing that?"

I know I have very high expectations and expect much from the employees of this Network. I raise our hand *first* to be involved in any new project or technology.

We are all pressured to do more with less and we can get easily frustrated because we feel

individually or as part of a team we are unable to deliver or make a difference. WE ARE making a difference in health care and to our patients. Our patients are commenting. Others are noticing.

We need to continually be creative and adapt to our changing environment if we are going to be there and continue to lead health care into the 21st century.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "F.L. Malphurs".

F.L. Malphurs
Network Director

NATIONAL VA NEWS

Dr. Bagian Heads Patient Safety Initiative

James P. Bagian M.D., a former astronaut, engineer, and a physician, is heading up the VA's National Patient Safety initiative in Ann Arbor, Michigan. He is responsible for making health care more error-free, a step recommended in the comprehensive report on errors in medicine issued late last year by the Institute of Medicine.

Dr. Bagian knows first-hand the aviation industry's precise approach to incident investigation and prevention. He helped retrieve the *CHALLENGER* capsule from the ocean floor following the explosion that killed its occupants and

helped redesign the shuttle capsule to try to prevent another similar tragic occurrence, adding an escape hatch and parachutes.

The VA Healthcare Network Upstate New York has initiated nine patient safety redesigns since the national initiative started. One of the major redesigns implemented in June was the bar coding for medication administration, which cuts medical errors by two-thirds, to ensure that the right medicine gets to the right patient.

More on patient safety on page five.

Gober Takes Over Top Spot At VA

WASHINGTON, D.C. -

Hershel W. Gober is now Acting Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), the federal government's second largest cabinet agency.

Former VA Secretary, Togo West, announced his departure on July 10.

With an annual budget of \$48 billion, VA employs about 219,000 people at hundreds of VA medical centers, clinics, benefits offices, and national cemeteries throughout the country.



VISN 2 AWARDS & RECOGNITIONS

Goalsharing Shares Success At OPM Symposium

The Year 2000 Office of Personnel Management (OPM) Symposium on Employee and Labor Relations (SOELR) was held in Atlanta this June 2000. Colleen B. Murphy and Judith Kaczmarek from the VA Western New York Healthcare System presented Network 2's Goalsharing program, which is in its third year of implementation.

The other participants which included the Social Security Administration, U.S. Postal Office, OPM, Federal Labor Relations Authority and Department of Treasury among others, were very interested and impressed with the advantages of the program which combines the best features of profit sharing and gain sharing.

Mrs. Murphy and Mrs. Kaczmarek took advantage of this opportunity to educate over 900 participants on goalsharing, meet with colleagues to share lessons learned, and to assist with implementation of the program in other agencies.

To learn more about goalsharing go to the following web pages:

www.va.gov/visns/visn02/vitalsigns/goalsharing.html OR
<http://vawww.visn2.med.va.gov/vitalsigns/goalsharing.html>



On July 7, 2000 Syracuse VA observed the 50th Anniversary of the Korean War by bringing together representatives of the South Korean government and the Central NY Korean community to offer thanks to Korean War Veterans. Over 200 guests packed the Syracuse VA auditorium. Cutting the commemorative cake is Network 2 Director Frederick L. Malphurs, Korean War Association State President Jim Ferris, South Korean Consulate General Ri-Hoon Hur, Bruce Ackerman, CNY Chairman, Korean War Anniversary Committee, Acting Director Richard Kazel.



Social Work month was highlighted at the Buffalo VA with a health fair. Twenty-five agencies from the community participated. The purpose was to educate patients, co-workers and the public about long-term care planning.





MORE VISN 2 AWARDS & RECOGNITIONS



Accepting the Scissors Award are left to right Mark Hahn, Co-leader for Geriatrics and Extended Care Line, Albany; Laurie Guerri, Patient Advocate, Canandaigua; Cindy Moscatello, Patient Representative, Albany; Pamela Bolton, Patient Services Assistant, Bath; Ruth Lysyczyn, Patient Advocate, Bath; Carl Haneline, Veterans Service Center Manager, Bath; Angela Kearney, Patient Representative, Syracuse; Barth Brawdy, Marketing Representative, Syracuse; Joseph Ortolano, Veteran Service Center Manager Syracuse; Jeff Grandon, Web Developer, Albany; and Kim Nazi, Web Master, Albany.

Customer Service Initiatives On the Net:

<http://vaww.visn2.med.va.gov/customer/initiatives/helpdesk.html>



William F. Feeley, Director VA Western New York Health System, presented eight employees certificates for Basic Sign Language Workshop. Mary Colleen Pudlewski, Annette Bernacki, Kathy McLean, and Coordinator Karen Lott conducted the course for the EEO Program.

Virtual Help Desk Receives Scissors Award

The VISN 2 Virtual Help Desk received the Deputy Secretary's Scissors Award Program. The Virtual Help Desk was praised for improving the quality and timeliness of service to veterans by providing an e-mail based help desk process. The 25-member Virtual Help Desk Team fields a diverse range of requests from veteran patients, family members, caregivers and others.

Employees Given Gold Medals

April Zaidel, Medical Care Cost Recovery at VAWNYHS, Chris Minardi and Randy Baty of the Albany CIO field office, received gold medals from W. Todd Grams, VHA Chief Financial Officer. They serve on a national committee that instituted new integrated billing and accounts receivable reports. Their work included writing the specifications for the reports, testing and implementation, as well as making improvements on existing reports already in the VISTA system.



TSP Notice

The Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board has announced that the scheduled implementation of the new TSP record keeping system has been postponed because the contractor has not made sufficient progress in testing the system and in fixing numerous software defects disclosed to date. **This means that none of the new options will be available on October 1, 2000 as planned.** There has not been a new implementation date set at this time.

The Board will be sending all TSP participants a special mailing advising them of these developments.

Additional information concerning this matter, including a questions and answers section is available on the TSP web site. Go to **www.tsp.gov** then click on "Current Information" and then on "What's New."



Golden Olympics

The Bath VA hosted the 12th Annual Golden Olympics, Friday June 23, 2000 from 10:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., in the Recreation Building, rear parking lot and pavilion. Olympic organizers had 114 participants



Betty Margeson, nursing home care ward secretary at the Bath VAMC is one of the many staff members who helped participants enjoy this special event.

representing ten area nursing homes to take part in this year's games. This year's events included: Horseshoes, Basketball Throw, Billiards, Shuffleboard, Bowling, Ping Pong, True/False, Multiple Choice, Name That Tune and more.



Disaster Exercise

Dr. Larry Flesh, Network Medical Director participated in the VA's Emergency Radiological Response Team (MERRT) Consequence 2000 disaster exercise May 15-19. The team consists of 25 VA professionals with radiation expertise, five Nuclear Medicine Physicians and 20 Health Physicists. The group was formed in 1991 and its task is to be the secondary response to a federally declared radiological disaster. This group periodically is put on alert when the probability of terrorist activities arise.



Dr. Flesh, Network Medical Director





Network 2 Pushes Forward in Patient Safety with Root Cause Analysis (RCA) Training

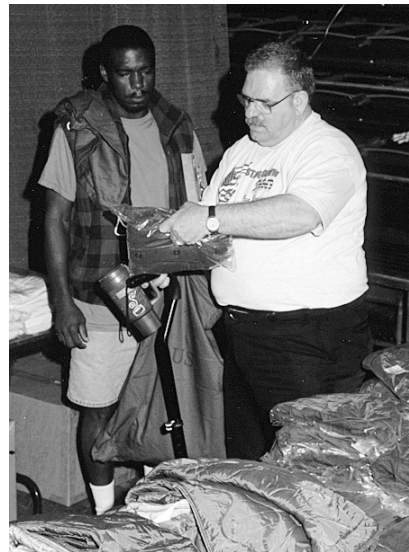
As part of the National VA Patient Safety Program Dr. James Bagian, Director of National Center for Patient Care, is providing teams of employees Root Cause Analysis (RCA) training or "Just in Time Training."

Root Cause Analysis (RCA) gives the bigger picture by identifying and analyzing what changes can be made in the system through either re-design or development of new processes or systems that would reduce the risk of the event or close call recurrence. The big picture finds out what happened, why it happened, and what can you do to prevent it from happening again?

The VA Healthcare Network Upstate New York has initiated nine patient safety redesigns. One of the major redesigns implemented was BCMA which cuts medical errors by two-thirds, to ensure that the right medicine gets to the right patient.

RCA is important in patient safety redesign because it helps to develop action plans to make things better and to move "Beyond BLAME."

Lessons learned across the Network will be shared to prevent recurrence. Future expectations will include redesign of medical equipment and medical delivery systems



Frank Policastri, Assistant Director, VETS, U.S. Dept. of Labor offers assistance to a veteran at Syracuse VA's STANDDOWN 2000, held at the Onondaga War Memorial on July 29, 2000. Over 116 veterans attended the 12 hour event.

Marketing Outreach Efforts Continue to be Successful



Rochester VA Outpatient Clinic (ROPC) Homeless Outreach Program and St. Mary's VA Clinic staff were at the Upper Falls Plaza in Rochester to enroll new veterans into the VA Health Care System and identify homeless veterans in need of services this past July.



The Bath VA celebrated the grand opening of their new Elmira CBOC with Congressman Amory Houghton, former Acting Medical Center Director Joseph Striano, Chemung County Executive Thomas Santulli and State Senator Randy Kuhl.





Personnel Info

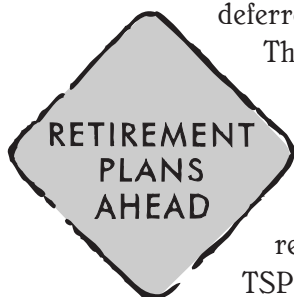
On the Senate Floor:

The Senate Governmental Affairs Committee approved a bill authorizing the Office of Personnel Management to set up a proposed long-term care program.

The Senate committee also approved an amendment to the long-term care bill that provides financial relief to federal employees who, through no fault of their own were placed in the wrong retirement program.



Another bill cleared by the Senate committee would allow new government hires to make tax-deferred contributions to the Thrift Savings Plan as soon as their employment starts and allow workers joining the government from the private-sector to move retirement saving into the TSP just as they could do if they changed jobs in the private sector.



PLANNING AHEAD

In the near future the Network Print Shop at Bath will be upgrading their equipment. This new equipment will enhance the quality of our VISN 2 communication pieces.

Contact the Print Shop when developing your printed products. A Development/Design/Print form has been developed for use when producing communication pieces.

It is available by contacting the Print Shop at:

MS Exchange: visn2printshop@med.va.gov OR
Telephone: (607) 664-4851 OR

through the VISN 2 web site at:

<http://vaww.visn2.med.va.gov/bath/graphicarts/index.html>

VISN 2 On the Web...

Over 420 Virtual Help Desk requests have been answered.

Visit the site on the Intranet or the Internet:

<http://vaww.visn2.med.va.gov/>

<http://www.va.gov/visns/visn02/>



VA Healthcare Network
Upstate New York